



News Opinion National Issues Special Reports Cartoons Photos The Report

Ken Walsh's Washington Newsgram Washington Whispers At the Edge Data Mine The Run 2016

## High School Students Head to Factories for Internships

An program pairs Indiana students in high school engineering and manufacturing programs with area companies.



Aaron Mak Hoffman, a student at Benton Central High School, and Kelsey Towers-Jones, a graduate of West Lafayette High School, work on a project to make scrap metal tracking and transportation at the voestalpine Rotec factory on June 11, 2015, in Lafayette, Ind.

By [Associated Press](#)

June 22, 2015 | 2:06 p.m. EDT

[+ More](#)



By Dylan Peers McCoy  
Journal & Courier

LAFAYETTE, Ind. (AP) - For as long as she can remember, Kelsey Towers-Jones has been fascinated by machines.

"My dad tells me that when I was 2 or so, we went for a walk and we spent a few hours just watching a demolition site because I was just so enthralled by the bulldozers and things," said Towers-Jones, who graduated from [West Lafayette High School](#) this spring and plans to study mechanical engineering at Waterloo University.

This summer, Towers-Jones and more than 80 other budding engineers will build and work with machines as part of a new internship program designed to give high school students experience in manufacturing, the Journal & Courier reported (<http://on.jconline.com/1PI5Sn>).

The internship pairs students in high school engineering and manufacturing programs with area companies. It is organized by Conexus Indiana, an industry-led partnership to promote manufacturing and logistics.

Participating students work full time in manufacturing or logistics for six weeks, said Tracey Everett, who helped coordinate the program. They are paid at least \$9 per hour, which is reimbursed by Conexus.

[**READ:** [School Links Manufacturing and Aerospace to Meet Workforce Need](#)]

"Now that (students) are starting to enroll in pre-engineering and manufacturing course work, we want them to then take that and either go to the appropriate post-secondary programs, whether it's Ivy Tech (Community College) or Purdue (University), or be able to have some skills that they can take to work," Everett said. "We want this to help be that bridge so that they persist in the field and become employees for our companies."

Some students know exactly what they want to do long term. For others, such as Gaige Lucas, who will be a junior at [Jefferson High School](#) next year, this is a chance to explore what kind of engineering track they want to pursue.

Lucas is interning for Wabash National Corp., where he will spend the next few weeks doing job rotations throughout the plant.

"It's been pretty fun," Lucas said. "I thought going into Wabash it would just be like a basic factory, dirty and stuff. But it's actually very clean and nice."

[**RELATED:** [Obama Aims to Boost Manufacturing Sector Through Executive Actions](#)]

Without a program like Conexus, it's rare for high school students to find summer manufacturing internships, according to Pamela Rager, the career and technical education director of the Wildcat Creek Career Cooperative, which serves Greater Lafayette schools.

"Anytime that we can connect our students to careers and have those real life experiences, it really helps them to define what their future pathway will be," she said.

Towers-Jones knows what she wants to do – mechanical engineering, hopefully in the auto industry. But this internship is giving her a head start and a chance to narrow down her focus. She's in her second week as an intern at voestalpine Rotec, which designs and manufactures tubing for vehicles. It's a good fit for a student who loves engineering and cars.

"I like drawing cars a lot," said Towers-Jones, who's also a visual artist. "Sometimes I'll be sketching Lamborghinis and fancy cars cause they're pretty sweet ... sleek."



Steven Myers and Kelsey Towers-Jones discuss ideas for improving scrap metal tracking at voestalpine Rotec in Lafayette, Ind.

ADVERTISEMENT

TAGS: STEM education, STEM jobs, high school, Indiana

[+ More](#)

**You Might Also Like**